

FRANK J. BURROWS.

JUNE 23, 1898.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House and ordered to be printed.

Mr. GRAFF, from the Committee on Claims, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany S. 1515.]

The Committee on Claims, to whom was referred the bill (S. 1515) for the relief of Frank J. Burrows, have had the same under consideration, and report:

A similar bill having been reported in the first session of the Forty-ninth Congress, and again in the first session of the Fifty-second Congress, and first session Fifty-fourth Congress, the facts being so fully set forth in said reports, this committee adopts the same and makes it a part of this report, and recommends that the bill do pass.

[House Report No. 3326, Forty-ninth Congress, first session.]

The Committee on Claims, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 3545) for the relief of Frank J. Burrows, having had the same under consideration, respectfully report: That Frank J. Burrows was postmaster at the city of Williamsport P. O., Pa., from 1882 to ———; that on the 30th day of August, 1884, the said post-office was robbed of 50,000 1-cent postage stamps and 150,000 2-cent stamps, aggregating in value \$3,500, and also of \$522 in money.

The said robbery was committed about a quarter to twelve o'clock (noon), when the postmaster, clerks, carriers, and employes of the post-office were at dinner, with the exception of the assistant postmaster, the mailing clerk, and the delivery and stamp clerk. The mailing clerk was busy at his desk. The delivery and stamp clerk was at the general delivery window, and the assistant postmaster, Mr. Shay, was occupied in the money-order office in the rear part of the office. The stamps and money stolen were in an iron safe belonging to the Department, and furnished for that purpose by the Department. The stamps were in the original packages in which they had been sent to the post-office.

While so engaged as aforesaid a boy came in and told the assistant postmaster that a gentleman in a buggy in front of the door wished to speak to him. Mr. Shay, the assistant postmaster, at once left his work and went to the door. The man in the buggy said he was sorry to have brought him out, but he was lame and could not get out of the buggy. He then said that he wanted to ask him how he would have to proceed to get seeds from the Department, etc. Mr. Shay replied that he was not able to give him the information, but supposed he could get them through the Member of Congress from his district. Mr. Shay then returned to his office, not having been gone, as he thinks, more than three or four minutes. That afternoon it was

discovered that the stamps mentioned had been taken from the safe and packages similar in size and appearance substituted for them; also that the money mentioned had been stolen. It is supposed that while the man in the buggy engaged the assistant postmaster in conversation, a confederate, or confederates, entered by a side door from the alley or through a window and committed the robbery. Diligent effort was made by the postmaster and the inspectors and officials of the Post-Office Department to discover and apprehend the thieves, but without success.

A. G. Sharp, chief inspector, Post-Office Department, in a letter to Hon. William T. Price, dated January 13, 1885, in answer to one for information as to the robbery, says:

"A thorough examination was made by an inspector to ascertain if there was any evidence of collusion between the thieves and the employees of the Williamsport office, or any of them, but none could be found. * * * A rigid and searching investigation was made of the accounts of the office, and everything was found to be in good shape, except the losses before stated. The assistant postmaster has the absolute confidence of the postmaster, and, in fact, the confidence of everyone with whom he has come in business contact."

J. M. Speese, the inspector of the Post-Office Department who investigated the said robbery within a few days after the same was committed, states, in a letter written by him to a member of this committee: "This robbery was planned by ingenious and bold thieves from New York, and due vigilance could not have prevented its execution." He also states: "I have always found the Williamsport post-office intelligently and carefully managed, and the interests of the Department and the public carefully conducted."

The Post-Office Department, in a communication addressed to the Hon. Chas. N. Brumm, chairman of the Committee on Claims, under date of January 29, 1896, says, relative to this claim:

"I will, however, say that for several years this Department has been allowing claims for loss occurring under circumstances similar to this case, and if the claim was now presented to the Department for the first time, it would be recommended for allowance as coming within the purview of the act of Congress of May 9, 1888. (Sup. to R. S. of 1891, pp. 585-6.)

"Very respectfully,

"JOHN L. THOMAS,

"Assistant Attorney-General, Post-Office Department."

From all the evidence your committee conclude that no blame can attach to said postmaster for said loss, and, believing that he should have credit on his account with the Government for said loss as provided in the bill, recommend that the bill do pass.

